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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's opening prayer will be offered by the Reverend Camille Murray, pastor of Georgetown Presbyterian Church.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we give You thanks for the many provisions of this day and for the simple and sustaining gifts which enrich our lives. We thank You for the beauty and bounty of this great Nation. We offer You praise for the heritage we share, the faith we cherish, and the freedoms we enjoy.

As Your grateful people, we ask that You would remind us of the callings You have placed upon our lives. We pray that we would be faithful to those callings and to those entrusted to our care. May those elected to lead be given a double portion of Your Spirit, that they may have vision and wisdom from above.

Gracious God, keep us pure in thought, honest in speech, and diligent in our pursuit of the common good, all for the glory of Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The Senator from Minnesota.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I want to thank Camille Murray for our opening prayer this morning.

Reverend Murray currently serves in our Nation's Capital as the 20th senior pastor of the Georgetown Presbyterian Church. The church was founded in 1780, and Reverend Murray is the first woman pastor.

Reverend Murray grew up in my home State, in Mahtomedi, MN. She holds degrees from Vanderbilt University, Princeton Theological Seminary, Oxford University, and Wesley Seminary.

Reverend Murray's congregation is nonpartisan, with the belief that God transcends that which divides us.

We are so happy that she led us today in prayer.

Thank you very much.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Democrats have chosen to deny the Senate a final vote on the President's deal with Iran. They made their choice, but that doesn't mean the discussion is over.

Today we will have another opportunity to address the lifting of congressionally mandated sanctions as called for in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Today we will have an opportunity to vote on a question of policy: Should Iran be left with a threshold nuclear program, one now recognized by the P5+1, and receive billions of dollars in sanctions relief without any linkage whatsoever to other aspects of its foreign policy adventurism. That is the question before us.

I will discuss that vote in greater detail in just a moment but first a reminder of how we got to this point.

Here is what we know about the nuclear deal with Iran. It is President Obama's deal with Iran, not America's

deal with Iran, because the President did everything possible to cut the American people out and to block their elected representatives from having a say.

He refused a treaty, because as Secretary Kerry noted quite candidly, he wasn't interested in negotiating something an elected Congress could support. He then had to be persuaded that resisting legislation to allow Congress an up-or-down vote on it—just as he had to be persuaded when Congress passed sanctions legislation that helped bring Iran to the table in the first place—would be futile. In other words, he didn't want the legislation that gave us an opportunity to respond to the President's deal with Iran. It had so many supporters, he knew the veto would be overridden. Then he finally convinced his party, which had voted unanimously for the legislation that gave Congress an opportunity to weigh in on the President's deal, to then deny the American people the up-or-down congressional vote Democrats had promised. Our Democratic friends went to extreme lengths to protect the President politically. Because they did, Democrats ensured that this would be not just Obama's deal with Iran but the Democratic Party's deal with Iran too.

It is a deal that allows Iran to grow stronger in any number of ways: diplomatically, militarily, in terms of trade, and in terms of its enrichment program. It is also a deal that achieves hardly any of the Obama administration's primary goals. Secretary Kerry once declared that an accounting of Iran's military-related nuclear activities "will be part of a final" deal. "If there is going to be a deal," he promised, "it will be done." But it isn't.

Secretary Moniz once declared that he expected we would have anytime, anywhere access to Iranian nuclear facilities. We will not.

President Obama once declared that "the deal we'll accept is they end their nuclear program—it's very straightforward"—or perhaps not quite so

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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straightforward because this deal will not end Iran's nuclear program.

Because the President made clear his desire to secure an agreement at any cost, it became easy for the Iranians to exploit concession after concession after concession. It became possible for the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism to secure a deal that allows it to enrich uranium, to maintain thousands of centrifuges, and to become a recognized nuclear-threshold state, forever on the edge of developing a weapon. Iran was even able to secure a multibillion-dollar cash windfall that will allow it to strengthen the terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas, along with Assad's bloody regime in Damascus—even the President basically admits as much.

The administration is now so invested in this deal that it is likely to veto any additional sanctions passed by Congress, even those against terrorism.

Presidents are able to secure stronger, better, and more durable outcomes when they seek constructive cooperation on matters beyond the water's edge.

Republicans stood proudly for more international trade jobs just a few months ago. The President agreed with us on the policy. We all fought in the same corner as a result. It was disappointing to then hear the same President dismiss honest intellectual disagreements on the Iran deal as reflexive opposition to him personally. What nonsense.

The President made a choice to turn this into a partisan campaign instead of a serious debate. He tried to cut out the American people and Congress at every single opportunity. Because he did, he has left his country and his party with an Executive deal that has hardly any durability or popular backing. Because he handled it this way, he has left his country and his party with an Executive deal that has hardly any durability or any public support. The American people aren't sold on it. A strong bipartisan majority of the House has rejected it. A strong bipartisan majority of the Senate rejects it too.

The deal can and likely will be revisited by the next Commander in Chief, but its negative consequences promise to live on regardless and far beyond one President's last few months in office.

Those who follow in the White House and in Congress will have to deal with an Iran enriched by billions of dollars to invest in conventional weapons upgrades and further support to terrorist groups. Many of us will be here in the future, when we have the need to work with the next President to decide how best to deal with Iran's ambitions and the future of this nuclear program.

One reason Iran was able to negotiate so successfully was because of Russian support for a deal that would be antithetical to America's interests. No surprise then that just days after the deal

was accounted, the commander of Iran's Quds Force reportedly flew to Moscow to secure Russian support for their mutual ally in Syria. No surprise then that as soon as the President had seemingly succeeded in securing the votes for a veto override, we heard that Russia was constructing a forward operating base to help prop up Assad. Iran's negotiating partner, Russia, will undoubtedly use its presence in Syria to attempt to leverage the Western powers to weaken sanctions crafted in response to the invasion of Crimea. That, my colleagues, is diplomatic linkage. Russia pursued it successfully; the Obama administration did not.

The administration attempted to negotiate this deal with a singular focus on ending Iran's nuclear program. Now we already know it failed in that regard, but that myopia also has other consequences as well, leading the administration to ignore many issues that should have been linked to the negotiations in the first place—everything from Iran's support for terrorism to its aggressive behavior across the Middle East, to its harassment of shipping vessels in the Persian Gulf—but not just those issues. The administration failed to negotiate to ensure the release of American citizens being held in Iranian custody. The administration failed to negotiate to ensure Iran's recognition of Israel's right to exist. But we can do something to link the freedom of American citizens being held in Iranian custody and the recognition of Israel to sanctions relief—something the administration should have done. We can say it has to be corrected before sanctions are lifted and billions more flow into Iranian coffers to be used for terrorism. That is what today's vote is about.

When it comes to American citizens being held in Iranian custody, the Senate voted unanimously just a few months ago to call for Iranian leaders to release our American citizens. One is a journalist in prison for spreading "propaganda against the state." Another is a pastor who dared to attend a Christian gathering.

When it comes to Israel, Iran employs invective against Israel at every turn. It has already demonstrated both the will and the capability to strike out against the West and through proxies and cyber attacks at allies like Israel and Saudi Arabia.

What this deal will not do is alter Iran's behavior. What it will do is give Iran an even greater ability to follow through on these threats. So we cannot allow Iran to be empowered as a nuclear threshold state armed with billions in sanctions relief without at least providing some protection—some protection to Israel first, without at least demanding the release of Americans who have languished in Iranian custody for years first.

Let's at least agree on that. I understand there is strong division in the Senate—a bipartisan majority opposed, partisan minority in favor—over the

broader Iranian deal. But at the very least, at the very least, we should be able to come together over the vote we will take today. So I would urge all of my colleagues to vote for it.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN AND GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senate has already spoken and made it absolutely clear that the agreement with Iran will stand. Remember, an agreement to stop Iran from having a nuclear weapon is what it is all about. The issue has been decided. Instead of focusing on the critical issue of funding our government, Senator MCCONNELL has decided to waste an entire week on something that has already been decided, twice.

First, we are voting on the McConnell amendment, which would keep the President from being able to suspend or waive sanctions on Iran unless Iran frees all Americans and formally recognizes the State of Israel. All Senators, Democrats and Republicans, want all the Americans held by Iran or who have disappeared in Iran to come back home to their families as quickly as possible. We believe that Iran should recognize the State of Israel. We believe the other countries in that area should join along. We are very happy with the arrangement between Egypt and Israel which has been going on for many, many years and has been very good for some degree of stability in the area.

What Republican colleagues are doing now is very, very cynical. They are taking serious issues and turning them into pawns on a political chess board. Here is what Senator STABENOW said yesterday. Remember, she is the Senator from Michigan. She has a person from Michigan who has been held in Iran for some time now. Here is what she said yesterday:

The Senate Republican leader is . . . playing politics with Amir's life. The imprisonment of this veteran—this American hero—is being used by the Senate majority leader in a transparent attempt to score some cheap political points . . . and it's appalling. No American should ever be used in this way.

Elaborating, she told me that his family wants us to stay out of it, progress is being made. Please stay out of it. That is what his sister said. This cynical tactic is a waste of the Senate's time. We should be focused on preventing a government shutdown. Senator MCCONNELL has decided that the Senate should vote not once, not twice, but a third time on the resolution of disapproval, which has already failed, as I mentioned before, on two separate occasions.

The results will be the same today. Yet Senate Republicans appear to be